

UPSC DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

MAINS-ORIENTED PREMIUM STUDENT EDITION

17 SEPTEMBER 2026

10

CURATED UPSC THEMES

10

PRELIMS MCQs + DETAILED SOLUTIONS

4

FULL MODEL ANSWERS: GS-I | GS-II | GS-III | GS-IV

4

MAP / DIAGRAM PRACTICE TASKS

EDITORIAL STANDARD

Current affairs are selected for UPSC syllabus utility, analytical depth and answer-writing value. News is the trigger; the syllabus is the organising framework. Government claims are separated from critical analysis.



1. SEMICON India 2026: Semiconductor Sovereignty and the Ecosystem Approach

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-III | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

17 September marks the opening of SEMICON India 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi. PIB says 12 semiconductor projects have been approved under Semicon 1.0 and three have commenced commercial production.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

Semiconductor policy must be analysed as industrial policy + strategic autonomy + global value-chain integration. A viable ecosystem needs design, fabs, ATMP/OSAT, equipment, specialty materials, ultra-pure water, reliable power, R&D; and skills.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Global semiconductor market: about USD 796 bn in 2025; PIB projects over USD 2 tn by 2030.
- India demand: about USD 50 bn currently; projected around USD 103 bn by 2030.
- Semicon 2.0 has six major pillars according to PIB.
- UPSC hook: critical technologies, manufacturing, supply-chain resilience, strategic autonomy.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Opportunity: electronics demand and design talent can anchor domestic scale.
- Strategic: trusted chips reduce vulnerability in defence, telecom and critical infrastructure.
- Constraint: fabs are capital-, technology-, water- and energy-intensive.
- Policy test: domestic learning and supplier depth matter more than headline investment.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Critically examine India's semiconductor strategy as an instrument of technological sovereignty and industrial transformation.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

SEMICON INDIA 2026

1

Fifth edition; 17–19 September 2026 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi; theme: “Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem”.

2

Jointly organised by India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), MeitY and SEMI; 600+ exhibitors, 300 international companies and delegations from 40+ countries expected.

3

12 semiconductor projects approved under Semicon 1.0; 3 have commenced commercial production.

4

Semicon 1.0 was approved in December 2021 with ₹76,000 crore outlay; Semicon 2.0 approved in July 2026 with ₹1,27,500 crore outlay.

5

Global semiconductor market: ~US\$796 bn in 2025, projected above US\$2 tn by 2030; India demand ~US\$50 bn, projected ~US\$103 bn by 2030.

2. EPFO Wage Ceiling Enhancement: Social Security versus Cost of Formal Employment

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II/III | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved enhancement of the mandatory EPFO wage ceiling from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 per month on 16 September.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

Contributory social security can widen old-age protection and payroll formalisation, but non-wage labour costs can affect MSMEs and hiring incentives. UPSC answers should balance worker protection with ease of compliance.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Previous ceiling: Rs 15,000, unchanged since September 2014.
- New approved ceiling: Rs 25,000 per month.
- EPFO is under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- Use with themes: formalisation, social protection, labour codes, demographic transition.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Equity: extends retirement protection to more lower/middle-wage workers.
- Economy: payroll coverage improves documented formal employment.
- MSME concern: higher contributions may increase labour cost.
- Reform: portability, simple digital compliance and grievance redress are essential.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Expansion of contributory social security must be designed so that worker protection and formal job creation reinforce each other. Discuss.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

EPFO WAGE CEILING

1

Union Cabinet approved enhancement of the mandatory EPFO wage ceiling from **₹15,000** to **₹25,000** per month.

2

The earlier **₹15,000** ceiling had been in force since September 2014.

3

EPFO functions under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

4

The change expands the wage band covered by mandatory provident-fund social security.

5

For Prelims, distinguish EPFO/EPF from pension and other welfare institutions; remember the administering ministry.

3. Swachh Seva Aankalan: 73rd Amendment, Gram Sabha and Outcome-Based Sanitation

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

Swachh Seva Aankalan is an annual Gram Panchayat-level digital self-assessment under SBM-Grameen 2.0, with Gram Sabha validation and multi-tier review.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

This is a strong decentralisation case study: local bodies assess ODF sustainability, visual cleanliness, solid/liquid waste management and O&M; of sanitation assets. The key Mains issue is whether digital monitoring strengthens democratic accountability.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- PIB explicitly links SSA to the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.
- Actors: Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha, VWSC, district and State/UT authorities.
- Focus: ODF sustainability, SLWM, cleanliness and functionality/O&M;.
- Gram Sabha validation is designed to strengthen transparency and community participation.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Democratic decentralisation: data becomes useful when citizens can validate it.
- Service delivery: shifts focus from asset creation to functionality and maintenance.
- Risk: self-reporting can incentivise target gaming.
- Way forward: public dashboards + social audit + independent sample verification + capacity grants.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Digital governance can deepen decentralisation only when technology is embedded in participatory institutions. Discuss with reference to rural sanitation.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

SWACHH SEVA AANKALAN

1

Launched on 15 September 2026 by the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) 2.0.

2

It is an annual Gram Panchayat-level digital self-assessment framework for rural sanitation service delivery.

3

Participants include Gram Panchayats, Gram Sabhas, Village Water & Sanitation Committees, Districts and States/UTs.

4

It assesses ODF sustainability, visual cleanliness, Solid & Liquid Waste Management and functionality/O&M of sanitation assets.

5

Findings are discussed and validated by the Gram Sabha; PIB explicitly links the initiative with the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

4. Net Zero Portal & NAPCC Dashboard: Transparency in Climate Governance

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II/III | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

India launched a Net Zero Portal and NAPCC Dashboard on World Ozone Day 2026 to support voluntary net-zero disclosures and consolidated monitoring of National Climate Missions.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

Climate governance needs credible measurement, reporting and verification. Digital disclosure can improve transparency but may also create greenwashing risks if targets lack baselines, boundaries, verification and credible transition plans.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Net Zero Portal: voluntary registration and disclosure by entities.
- Entities are encouraged to report Scope 1 and Scope 2; Scope 3 remains voluntary.
- NAPCC Dashboard consolidates mission-related information and indicators.
- National long-term net-zero target: 2070.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Governance: dashboards can expose implementation gaps and improve coordination.
- Business: comparable disclosures can influence finance and supply chains.
- Integrity: voluntary claims need credible methodologies and audit trails.
- Federal dimension: implementation depends on ministries, states, cities and sectoral regulators.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Can voluntary digital climate-disclosure platforms improve accountability without becoming instruments of greenwashing? Analyse.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

NET ZERO PORTAL & NAPCC DASHBOARD

1

Launched on 16 September 2026 in Mumbai on the 32nd World Ozone Day by MoEFCC.

2

Net Zero Portal is a centralised platform for voluntary registration/disclosure of net-zero commitments by Indian entities.

3

Entities can disclose GHG emissions, targets and annual progress; Scope 1 and Scope 2 reporting is encouraged, while Scope 3 remains voluntary.

4

The NAPCC Dashboard consolidates information and identified indicators across National Missions for systematic monitoring.

5

World Ozone Day 2026 theme in India's national celebration: "Global Action for a Cooler Planet".

5. Kishau Multipurpose Project: Cooperative Federalism in River-Basin Development

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

The Kishau project on the Tons-Yamuna system has returned to current affairs through interstate coordination over a long-pending multipurpose storage and hydropower proposal.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

Inter-State river projects distribute costs and benefits unevenly. Analyse through cooperative federalism, basin planning, environmental appraisal, rehabilitation and downstream water security.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Constitutional anchors: Article 262; Entry 17 State List; Entry 56 Union List.
- Tons is a major tributary of the Yamuna.
- Multipurpose storage links hydropower, drinking water, irrigation and seasonal regulation.
- Himalayan projects require cumulative ecological and seismic-risk assessment.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Federalism: durable agreements need trusted hydrological data and benefit sharing.
- Environment: basin-level cumulative impact is superior to project-by-project appraisal.
- Social justice: rehabilitation must include livelihood and local benefit sharing.
- Climate: reservoir rules need adaptive management under changing hydrology.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

The Kishau project illustrates why inter-State water governance requires institutions of cooperative federalism rather than project-centric bargaining. Discuss.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

KISHAU MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

1

Kishau is a proposed multipurpose project on the Tons River, a major tributary of the Yamuna.

2

The project geography lies around the Himachal Pradesh–Uttarakhand region in the Upper Yamuna basin.

3

The proposal combines storage/water benefits with hydropower generation.

4

Relevant constitutional anchors for inter-State river governance: Article 262, Entry 17 of State List and Entry 56 of Union List.

5

For map-based revision, locate Tons River, Yamuna, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi.

6. Trans-Karakoram / Shaksgam: Strategic Geography and the China-Pakistan Axis

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

Recent reporting on Pakistan-China boundary coordination has revived India's stated objection to the 1963 China-Pakistan boundary agreement concerning territory claimed by India.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

The UPSC value lies in strategic geography: Karakoram, Ladakh, Siachen, Shaksgam and CPEC connect sovereignty, infrastructure and the China-Pakistan strategic partnership.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- India does not recognise the legal validity of the 1963 agreement over territory it claims.
- Shaksgam lies in the trans-Karakoram region.
- CPEC adds a connectivity and strategic-infrastructure dimension.
- Map practice must distinguish claims/administration from settled international boundaries.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Security: geography affects logistics and a two-front contingency.
- Diplomacy: formal legal positions coexist with practical border management.
- Connectivity: infrastructure can change strategic access without resolving sovereignty.
- Policy: surveillance, infrastructure, diplomacy and crisis management must work together.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Explain how the Trans-Karakoram region links territorial sovereignty with connectivity and India's two-front security challenge.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

TRANS-KARAKORAM / SHAKSGAM

1

Shaksgam/Trans-Karakoram tract lies in the Karakoram strategic region north of the main Himalayan arc.

2

India does not recognise the 1963 China–Pakistan boundary agreement concerning territory claimed by India.

3

The issue is linked to India–China–Pakistan strategic geography and the wider Karakoram region.

4

For map practice, locate Ladakh, Karakoram Range, Siachen region and the Trans-Karakoram tract.

5

Disputed areas should be represented using authoritative official maps and described in terms of claims/administration rather than as settled boundaries.

7. Himalayan Cascading Hazards: Beyond the Conventional GLOF Framework

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-I/III | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

New reporting on an avalanche-triggered flood in Nepal highlights how ice/rock failure can cascade into avalanche, water displacement, debris flow and destructive downstream flooding.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

A cascading hazard is a chain in which one process triggers another. In the Himalayas, warming, unstable ice/permafrost, steep relief, sediment and valley infrastructure can combine into compound risk.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Cryosphere includes glaciers, snow, permafrost and frozen ground.
- Not every glacier-related flood is a classic GLOF.
- Remote sensing + seismic/ground sensors + hydrological monitoring provide complementary warning.
- Attribution of a single event to climate change requires event-specific evidence.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Geography: steep relief and narrow valleys accelerate run-out and concentrate exposure.
- Development: roads and hydropower can amplify consequences when placed in hazard corridors.
- Governance: single-hazard maps miss cascading failure pathways.
- Regional: transboundary rivers make data sharing and warning cooperation important.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Why do cascading hazards demand a reorientation of disaster-risk governance in the Himalayan region?

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

HIMALAYAN CASCADING HAZARDS

1

Recent Nepal reporting highlighted an avalanche/ice-rock failure capable of triggering destructive downstream flooding and debris movement.

2

A cascading hazard is a sequence in which one hazardous process triggers one or more subsequent processes.

3

Cryosphere includes glaciers, snow, permafrost and other frozen components of the Earth system.

4

An avalanche-triggered flood is not automatically a classic Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF); the triggering mechanism matters.

5

Satellite imagery, ground/seismic sensors and hydrological monitoring are complementary tools for Himalayan hazard assessment.

8. Maritime CBMs after India-Pakistan Naval Collision

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS	GS-II/III Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.
WHY IN NEWS	A collision between Indian and Pakistani naval vessels in international waters in the North Arabian Sea has raised questions about safe manoeuvring, operational communication and escalation control.
CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND	Maritime confidence-building measures (CBMs) do not remove rivalry; they reduce misperception and accidental escalation. Analyse alongside UNCLOS, professional seamanship, hotlines and bilateral military-notification arrangements.
VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS	
- Indian Express reported the incident roughly 120 nautical miles from the Gulf of Oman. - No damage to the Indian warship was reported; the Pakistani vessel reportedly returned to port. - International waters do not mean an absence of navigational rules. - UPSC hook: maritime security + crisis stability + confidence-building measures.	
MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL	
- Strategic stability: tactical incidents can acquire political significance quickly. - Operational safety: predictable manoeuvres and communication reduce collision risk. - Diplomacy: technical deconfliction can remain useful despite wider political disputes. - Indian Ocean: dense commercial and military traffic makes professional rules increasingly important.	
MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION	
Confidence-building measures are instruments of risk management, not substitutes for political settlement. Discuss in the context of maritime security in South Asia.	

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

INDIA–PAKISTAN NAVAL COLLISION / MARITIME CBMs

1

Recent reporting described a minor collision between Indian and Pakistani naval vessels in international waters in the North Arabian Sea.

2

The incident brought attention to operational communication, safe manoeuvring and confidence-building measures at sea.

3

International waters are not a legal vacuum; navigation continues to be governed by applicable international rules and professional seamanship.

4

Map anchors: North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz.

5

CBMs are mechanisms intended to reduce misperception and accidental escalation; they do not themselves settle underlying political disputes.

9. Swachhata Hi Seva 2026: Jan Bhagidari, Dignity of Labour and Behavioural Governance

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-II/IV | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 begins on 17 September with citizen participation, youth engagement, SafaiMitra safety, source segregation and special Gram Sabha/Council activities.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

Use this beyond a scheme note. It connects behavioural public policy, participatory governance, dignity of sanitation work, public ethics and the gap between episodic campaigns and institutional service delivery.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- 2026 theme: 'Swachhata Mein Sahbhag; Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat'.
- Five pillars include cleanliness target units, youth engagement, SafaiMitra safety, Jan Bhagidari and circularity.
- SafaiMitra camps include health checks, PPE/safety gear and welfare linkages.
- Special Gram Sabhas/Council meetings are planned for Swachh Bharat Diwas.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Behaviour: social norms matter for segregation and littering.
- Ethics: dignity and safety of sanitation workers must be central, not symbolic.
- Governance: campaigns need municipal systems, budgets and accountability to sustain outcomes.
- Citizenship: participation is valuable when it complements, not substitutes for, state responsibility.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Public participation can strengthen sanitation governance, but voluntarism cannot substitute for institutional responsibility. Examine.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

SWACHHATA HI SEVA 2026

1

Campaign is being observed from 17 September to 17 October 2026.

2

Theme: "Swachhata Mein Sahbhag; Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat".

3

Government has emphasised Jan Bhagidari, visible cleanliness outcomes, youth/student participation and SafaiMitra safety.

4

A school quiz on Solid Waste Management Rules 2026 runs from 17 September to 17 October for Classes 6–12 through Eco Clubs for Mission LiFE.

5

Special Campaign 6.0 has a target of 7 lakh cleanliness campaigns; it runs from 2–31 October 2026.

10. Ethics of Voluntary Net-Zero Claims: Integrity, Accountability and Greenwashing

SYLLABUS / PYQ LENS

GS-IV | Themes: governance, institutions, economy, society, geography, environment, security or ethics as applicable.

WHY IN NEWS

The new Net Zero Portal creates a timely ethics case around voluntary corporate and institutional climate commitments.

CORE CONCEPT / BACKGROUND

GS-IV should extract the ethical dilemma from current affairs: reputational incentives can encourage climate commitments, but vague boundaries or selective disclosure may mislead citizens and investors.

VALUE ADDITION: FACTS / ARTICLES / INSTITUTIONS

- Core values: integrity, transparency, accountability, stewardship and inter-generational justice.
- Stakeholders: firms, investors, consumers, workers, regulators, communities and future generations.
- Ethical risk: greenwashing, cherry-picking data, distant targets without near-term action.
- Ethical governance requires truthful disclosure plus independent verification.

MAINS ANALYSIS - MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Integrity: claims should reflect actual transition plans, not public-relations advantage.
- Accountability: responsibility must attach to measurable interim milestones.
- Justice: transition costs should not be shifted unfairly to vulnerable workers/communities.
- Prudence: uncertainty should be disclosed rather than hidden behind precise-looking targets.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

An organisation announces a 2050 net-zero target but excludes major value-chain emissions and uses the claim prominently in advertising. Identify the ethical issues and suggest a course of action for a public regulator.

CURRENT AFFAIRS — KEY FACTS FOR UPSC

ETHICS LINK — VOLUNTARY NET-ZERO DISCLOSURE

1

India's Net Zero Portal allows entities to voluntarily register and publicly disclose net-zero commitments and annual progress.

2

Scope 1 and Scope 2 reporting is encouraged; Scope 3 reporting remains voluntary.

3

Participating entities can outline pathways involving clean-energy transition, energy efficiency, technology interventions and carbon removals.

4

Entities successfully declaring targets receive an acknowledgement from MoEFCC; public declarations create a consolidated repository.

5

These factual design features create GS-IV issues around truthful disclosure, material omissions, accountability and greenwashing.

GS-I MODEL ANSWER

Why do cascading hazards demand a reorientation of disaster-risk governance in the Himalayan region? (15 marks, 250 words)

INTRODUCTION	The Himalaya is a young, tectonically active and high-relief mountain system. Climate-sensitive cryosphere processes increasingly interact with landslides, avalanches, sediment and dense valley infrastructure, creating chains of risk rather than isolated hazards.
BODY - CORE ARGUMENTS	• Geographical basis: steep slopes, fragile lithology, intense relief and narrow valleys accelerate mass movement and channel destructive flows. • Cryosphere link: glacier retreat, unstable ice and thawing permafrost can alter slope stability and lake formation, though individual-event attribution needs evidence. • Cascading mechanism: ice/rock collapse → avalanche → river/lake displacement or blockage → debris flow/flash flood → infrastructure failure. • Exposure: hydropower, roads, tourism and settlements are concentrated along valleys, converting hazards into disasters. • Governance implication: conventional single-hazard zonation may underestimate run-out, secondary failures and transboundary effects.
CHALLENGES / COUNTERPOINT	Monitoring is sparse; thresholds are uncertain; development decisions are fragmented across departments; warning time may be extremely short.
WAY FORWARD	Prepare multi-hazard inventories; combine satellites, seismic sensors and hydrology; model run-out corridors; regulate high-risk construction; create redundant warnings and community drills; institutionalise cross-border data sharing.
CONCLUSION	Resilient Himalayan development requires a shift from event-wise response to landscape-scale, multi-hazard and anticipatory risk governance.
ANSWER-WRITING VALUE ADDITION	Underline syllabus keywords. Use a small flowchart/map where appropriate. For GS-IV explicitly identify stakeholders, values, competing considerations and a reasoned course of action.

GS-II MODEL ANSWER

Digital governance can deepen decentralisation only when technology is embedded in participatory institutions. Discuss with reference to rural sanitation. (15 marks, 250 words)

INTRODUCTION	The 73rd Constitutional Amendment envisages democratic decentralisation through empowered Panchayats and Gram Sabhas. Swachh Seva Aankalan illustrates how digital monitoring can support this goal when local data is subjected to community validation.
BODY - CORE ARGUMENTS	• Transparency: digital indicators make sanitation gaps visible and comparable across Gram Panchayats. • Participation: Gram Sabha validation converts administrative data into a subject of public deliberation. • Outcome orientation: assessment of ODF sustainability, SLWM and O&M; shifts attention from construction to service quality. • Subsidiarity: Panchayats can identify local gaps and prepare corrective plans while districts/states provide technical and fiscal support. • Convergence: sanitation data can be linked with drinking water, health and waste-management planning.
CHALLENGES / COUNTERPOINT	Self-reporting can lead to target gaming; digital divides and weak Panchayat capacity may reduce data quality; excessive indicators can create compliance without accountability.
WAY FORWARD	Use simple outcome metrics, public dashboards, social audits, independent sample verification, untied capacity grants, VWSC strengthening and responsive grievance systems.
CONCLUSION	Digital tools deepen decentralisation only when they strengthen the Gram Sabha's voice and Panchayat capability rather than centralising control through dashboards.
ANSWER-WRITING VALUE ADDITION	Underline syllabus keywords. Use a small flowchart/map where appropriate. For GS-IV explicitly identify stakeholders, values, competing considerations and a reasoned course of action.

GS-III MODEL ANSWER

Critically examine India's semiconductor strategy as an instrument of technological sovereignty and industrial transformation. (15 marks, 250 words)

INTRODUCTION	Semiconductors are general-purpose inputs for digital infrastructure, automobiles, telecom, defence and AI. Recent supply disruptions have transformed chip policy from a narrow manufacturing question into one of economic resilience and strategic autonomy.
BODY - CORE ARGUMENTS	• Industrial transformation: fabs and advanced packaging can deepen electronics value chains and create demand for precision engineering, chemicals and equipment. • Strategic autonomy: trusted domestic capacity reduces exposure in critical infrastructure and defence supply chains. • Design advantage: India's engineering base can connect chip design with domestic manufacturing and system-level innovation. • Global integration: partnerships remain essential because semiconductor production is globally specialised; sovereignty should mean resilient interdependence, not autarky. • Spillovers: R&D, metrology, materials science and high-skill manufacturing can raise economy-wide technological capability.
CHALLENGES / COUNTERPOINT	Very high capital cost, rapid obsolescence, imported equipment/IP, water-energy intensity, skill shortages and global subsidy competition can produce expensive capacity without technological depth.
WAY FORWARD	Make incentives milestone-based; support design and advanced packaging; build common R&D facilities; create supplier clusters; develop technician/research pipelines; secure trusted technology partnerships; mandate water and energy efficiency.
CONCLUSION	Success should be measured by domestic learning, supplier depth and globally competitive systems—not simply by the number or value of announced fabs.
ANSWER-WRITING VALUE ADDITION	Underline syllabus keywords. Use a small flowchart/map where appropriate. For GS-IV explicitly identify stakeholders, values, competing considerations and a reasoned course of action.

GS-IV MODEL ANSWER

A company announces a 2050 net-zero target but excludes major value-chain emissions while prominently advertising itself as 'net zero aligned'. As a public regulator, identify the ethical issues and outline your course of action. (20 marks)

INTRODUCTION

The regulator faces a conflict between encouraging voluntary climate ambition and protecting citizens and markets from misleading environmental claims. The central ethical test is whether the disclosure reflects integrity in substance, not merely technical compliance.

BODY - CORE ARGUMENTS

- Integrity and truthfulness: selective boundaries can create a materially misleading impression.
- Transparency: consumers and investors should know which emissions are included, excluded and why.
- Accountability: distant targets without interim milestones weaken responsibility for present action.
- Inter-generational justice: postponing mitigation transfers environmental costs to future citizens.
- Fairness: greenwashing disadvantages firms making genuine, costly transitions.
- Public trust: weak regulatory response can undermine confidence in the entire voluntary disclosure framework.

CHALLENGES / COUNTERPOINT

Immediate punitive action without clear standards may discourage genuine voluntary commitments; yet allowing ambiguous claims rewards reputational arbitrage.

WAY FORWARD

Require correction/qualification of advertising; mandate disclosure of organisational boundary, Scope 1/2 and material Scope 3 gaps; seek measurable interim targets; establish verification/audit protocols; publish comparable disclosures; apply proportionate sanctions for repeated deception; provide guidance for good-faith transition plans.

CONCLUSION

The ethical objective is neither to punish ambition nor legitimise vague promises, but to ensure that public climate claims are truthful, comparable and accountable.

ANSWER-WRITING VALUE ADDITION

Underline syllabus keywords. Use a small flowchart/map where appropriate. For GS-IV explicitly identify stakeholders, values, competing considerations and a reasoned course of action.

POLITICAL MAP — INDIA & NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA & NEIGHBOURHOOD — CURRENT AFFAIRS LOCATOR



Highlight: India, Pakistan, China and Nepal; New Delhi (SEMICON); Kishau/Tons region; Ladakh; Nepal Himalaya; North Arabian Sea. Political boundaries are for geographic orientation; disputed territorial questions should be read with authoritative Government of India maps.

GEOGRAPHICAL MAP — INDIA

INDIA — PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY FOR CURRENT AFFAIRS



Revise: Himalaya, Karakoram, Yamuna–Tons system, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Pangong Tso. Connect physical geography to disaster management, water federalism and strategic geography.

WORLD POLITICAL MAP — CURRENT AFFAIRS LOCATOR

WORLD MAP — TODAY'S CURRENT-AFFAIRS GEOGRAPHY



Today's core countries: India, Pakistan, China and Nepal. Maritime anchors: Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz. Use the world map to build location-based elimination skills for Prelims.

SOUTH ASIA — STRATEGIC & PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

SOUTH ASIA — BORDERS, MOUNTAINS, STRAIT & MARITIME SPACE



Revise borders and relative location of India–Pakistan–China–Nepal; Karakoram and Himalaya; North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz. These features connect today's security, Himalayan hazard and maritime-current-affairs themes.

UPSC PRELIMS — QUESTION + SOLUTION TOGETHER

QUESTION 1

With reference to India's semiconductor ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. Advanced packaging and testing are part of the semiconductor value chain.
2. Semiconductor fabrication can require large quantities of ultra-pure water.
3. Semiconductor sovereignty necessarily implies complete technological autarky.

Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER: (b) 1 and 2 only

DETAILED SOLUTION

1 is correct: packaging/testing are integral stages. 2 is correct: fabs need ultra-pure water. 3 is incorrect: resilient supply chains can combine domestic capability with trusted international partnerships.

QUESTION 2

EPFO is administered under:

- (a) Ministry of Finance (b) Ministry of Labour & Employment (c) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (d) Ministry of Corporate Affairs

ANSWER: (b) Ministry of Labour & Employment

DETAILED SOLUTION

EPFO functions under the Ministry of Labour & Employment. The other ministries do not administer EPFO.

UPSC PRELIMS — QUESTION + SOLUTION TOGETHER

QUESTION 3

Swachh Seva Aankalan is associated with:

- (a) Urban municipal credit ratings (b) Gram Panchayat-level rural sanitation assessment (c) River pollution ranking (d) School sanitation only

ANSWER: (b) Gram Panchayat-level rural sa

DETAILED SOLUTION

SSA is an annual Gram Panchayat-level digital self-assessment under SBM-Grameen 2.0. Gram Sabha validation is built into the framework; therefore (a), (c) and (d) are incorrect.

QUESTION 4

Consider the following:

1. Scope 1: direct emissions from owned/controlled sources.
2. Scope 2: indirect emissions associated with purchased energy.
3. Scope 3: other value-chain emissions.

Which are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER: (d) 1, 2 and 3

DETAILED SOLUTION

All three are correctly matched. This classification is useful for understanding corporate climate disclosures and identifying greenwashing through omitted value-chain emissions.

UPSC PRELIMS — QUESTION + SOLUTION TOGETHER

QUESTION 5

Article 262 of the Constitution deals with:

(a) Inter-State river-water disputes (b) Finance Commission (c) Election disputes (d) All-India Services

ANSWER: (a) Inter-State river-water disputes

DETAILED SOLUTION

Article 262 concerns adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers/river valleys. Finance Commission is Article 280; All-India Services are linked to Article 312.

QUESTION 6

The Tons River is a tributary of:

(a) Ganga directly (b) Yamuna (c) Sutlej (d) Teesta

ANSWER: (b) Yamuna

DETAILED SOLUTION

Tons is a major tributary of the Yamuna and is central to the geography of the Kishau project. Sutlej and Teesta belong to different river systems.

UPSC PRELIMS — QUESTION + SOLUTION TOGETHER

QUESTION 7

The Shaksgam/Trans-Karakoram tract is associated with which mountain system?

(a) Aravalli (b) Karakoram (c) Satpura (d) Eastern Ghats

ANSWER: (b) Karakoram

DETAILED SOLUTION

The tract lies in the Trans-Karakoram strategic geography. Aravalli, Satpura and Eastern Ghats are peninsular Indian systems.

QUESTION 8

A cascading hazard is best understood as:

(a) A hazard repeated annually (b) One hazard triggering one or more subsequent hazards (c) A hazard confined to a river basin (d) Simultaneous earthquakes at two locations

ANSWER: (b) One hazard triggering one or more subsequent hazards

DETAILED SOLUTION

Cascading risk is a process chain. Example: ice-rock collapse may trigger avalanche, blockage/displacement and then debris flood. The other choices do not capture causal propagation.

UPSC PRELIMS — QUESTION + SOLUTION TOGETHER

QUESTION 9

Maritime confidence-building measures primarily seek to:

- (a) Abolish maritime boundaries (b) Reduce misperception and accidental escalation (c) Replace UNCLOS (d) Prohibit naval exercises

ANSWER: (b) Reduce misperception and acc

DETAILED SOLUTION

CBMs improve predictability through communication, notification and operating norms. They neither abolish boundaries nor replace international law, and do not necessarily prohibit exercises.

QUESTION 10

Which best captures the ethical problem of greenwashing?

- (a) All voluntary environmental targets are unethical. (b) Environmental claims may mislead when material facts or boundaries are omitted. (c) Firms should never advertise environmental performance. (d) Only governments can make climate commitments.

ANSWER: (b) Environmental claims may mis

DETAILED SOLUTION

Greenwashing is an integrity and transparency problem. Voluntary targets and environmental advertising are not inherently unethical; the problem is misleading claims, selective disclosure or unsupported impressions.